

Message Text

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51

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 OMB-01 SY-05 SCCT-01 IO-10

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

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P R 181352Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1368

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 0463

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS:VSPI,S, RH, ZA

SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF ANC/ZANU LEADER HERBERT CHITEPO

1. HERBERT CHITEPO, LEADER OF EXTERNAL WING OF ANC'S ZANU FACTION, WAS KILLED INSTANTLY MORNING OF MARCH 18 WHEN BOMB HIDDEN INSIDE HIS AUTO EXPLODED. CHITEPO, ACCOMPANIED BY TWO FREEDOM FIGHTERS (PRESUMABLY HIS BODY GUARDS), WAS BACKING OUT OF DRIVEWAY AT HIS LUSAKA HOME WHEN EXPLOSION OCCURRED. ONE OF HIS

COMPANIONS WAS ALSO KILLED; OTHER IS REPORTED AS SERIOUSLY INJURED.

2. CHITEPO WAS MAN WITH CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF POLITICAL ENEMIES, BOTH WITHIN AND WITHOUT ZANU. HIS PHYSICAL ELIMINATION, TOGETHER WITH DETENTION
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AND EFFORTS TO DISGRACE ZANU CHIEF NDABANINGI

SITHOLE, WOULD SEEMINGLY BENEFIT RHODESIAN GOVERNMENT BY ELIMINATING LEADERS OF MOST MILITANT FACTION WITHIN ANC AND ONE WHICH HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR CONTINUING GUERRILLA PRESENCE INSIDE RHODESIA. IF ANY ZANU ELEMENTS HAD BEEN PLOTTING ASSASSINATION OF ZAPU LEADER JOSHUA NKOMO OR OTHER SITHOLE RIVALS WITHIN ANC LEADERSHIP, AS ALLEGED BY RHODESIAN AUTHORITIES, THEN IT ALSO CONCEIVABLE THAT ZAPU COULD HAVE DECIDED TO STRIKE FIRST BY DOING IN CHITEPO. MOST LIKELY EXPLANATION, HOWEVER, IS THAT CHITEPO PROBABLY KILLED BY OPPONENTS WITHIN HIS OWN ZANU. AS LEADING MANICA TRIBESMAN, HE WAS POTENTIAL TARGET FOR RIVAL KARANGA TRIBAL ELEMENTS WITHIN ZANU MILITARY ARM WHO WERE TARGET OF ATTEMPTED MANICA ASSASSINATION PLOT THREE MONTHS AGO AND HAVE SINCE REPORTEDLY STRUCK BACK BY DETAINING OR EXECUTING A NUMBER OF MANICAS. CHITEPO IS UNDERSTOOD TO HAVE SURVIVED UNTIL TODAY PROBABLY BY REACHING SOME ACCOMMODATION WITH KARANGAS SUCH AS ZANU MILITARY LEADER TONGOGARA. WE HAVE HEARD FROM LOCAL SOURCE THAT CHITEPO, TONGOGARA, AND ANOTHER ZANU LEADER, HAMADZIRIPI, WERE RECENTLY DETAINED BY MALAWI AUTHORITIES WHILE TRAVELING IN THAT COUNTRY. TONGOGARA AND HAMADZIRIPI, REPORTEDLY ARMED, WERE DETAINED BUT CHITEPO WAS RELEASED AND ALLOWED TO RETURN TO ZAMBIA. IT IS POSSIBLE KARANGAS MAY HAVE SUSPECTED CHITEPO OF LURING HIS TWO COMPANIONS INTO TRAP TO GET THEM OUT OF WAY AND TAKEN REVENGE. ALTERNATIVELY, CHITEPO MAY EVEN HAVE BEEN VICTIM OF MANICA ELEMENTS WHO SAW HIM AS TRAITOR TO HIS FELLOW TRIBESMEN BY COOPERATING WITH KARANGAS.

3. ZAMBIAN INVESTIGATION INTO CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHITEPO'S DEATH HAS JUST BEGUN AND IT MAY BE SOME TIME, IF EVER, BEFORE EVIDENCE CAN BE ACCUMULATED WHICH WOULD POINT FINGER OF SUSPICION CLEARLY IN ANY ONE DIRECTION. MEANTIME, REMAINING ZANKV LEADERSHIP MAY SEEK PROMOTE BELIEF THAT CHITEPO'S DEATH WAS WORK OF RHODESIAN INTELLIGENCE, THUS STRENGTHENING THEIR ARGUMENT THAT SMITH IS THOROUGHLY UNTRUSTWORTHY AND NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE DROPPED IN FAVOR OF RETURN

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TO ESCALATED GUERRILLA ARFARE. IF ANC AS WHOLE FEELS IT MUST ENDORSE THIS LINE, THEN SITUATION ALREADY COMPLICATED BY SITHOLE ARREST WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY MORE DIFFICULT AND PROSPECTS FOR GETTING CONSISTENTIAL TALKS GOING BETWEEN ANC AND SMITH WILL BE EVEN DIMMER THAN THEY APPEAR NOW. FOR THESE REASONS WE BELIEVE ZAMBIANS WILL BE VERY CAUTIOUS IN HOW THEY HANDLE CHITEPO'S DEATH SO AS TO DAMPEN PREMATURE

SPECULATION THAT EVIDENCE MIGHT POINT CONVINCINGLY
AT EITHER RHODESIANS OR AT NON-ZANU FACTION
WITHIN LIBERATION MOVEMENT.
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